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From: Frithsen, Jeff
Sent: Fri 10/30/2015 5:40:23 PM
Subject: Fwd: As SAB Meets, Advocates Renew Calls For Broader EPA Fracking Study

Sent from Jeff Frithsen's iPhone

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Begin forwarded message:

From: "Phillips, Anna" <Phillips.Anna@epa.gov>
Date: October 30, 2015 at 1:35:10 PM EDT
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Subject: As SAB Meets, Advocates Renew Calls For Broader EPA Fracking Study

INSIDE EPA
Daily News

As SAB Meets, Advocates Renew Calls For Broader EPA Fracking Study

Posted: October 29, 2015

Environmentalists and property owners near hydraulic fracturing wells are renewing their calls for EPA to re-open its investigation into fracking's drinking water impacts, saying the draft report the agency's Science Advisory Board (SAB) is reviewing is deeply flawed.

"The study was limited in scope, it was poorly designed and relied on industry data," Food & Water Watch (FWW) Executive Director Wenonah Hauter said at an Oct. 28 press conference. She added that the study "has been used to justify the ongoing narrative about the safety of fracking" and that the report still contains "many examples of fracking groundwater contamination."

And speaking during a public comment session at the start of the SAB fracking panel's first in-person meeting Oct. 28, Tracy Carluccio of Delaware Riverkeeper, called on the agency to withdraw the draft report and launch a new study with a "more inclusive scope" that includes environmental impacts beyond drinking water. Carluccio also criticized the data

EPA relied on, saying it was poorly documented, often industry-supplied and based on unjustified assumptions.

EPA has said the draft report released in June is not intended to be a quantitative risk assessment, but instead identifies mechanisms by which fracking could potentially impact drinking water. The study found no “widespread” impacts to drinking water supplies from fracking but identified some potential “vulnerabilities” to water.

SAB members have highlighted limitations in the agency’s landmark draft study, including its lack of “prospective” baseline studies (Inside EPA, Oct. 23).

But EPA defends the report, and at the start of the SAB panel’s first in-person meeting Oct. 28-30 in Washington, D.C., Jeffrey Frithsen, of the agency’s National Center for Environmental Assessment, noted that the draft study is not intended to examine human health or human exposure or to examine site-specific conditions. “It’s not a risk assessment,” he said. “Our assessment is focused on following the water.

Environmentalists and residents who live near fracking operations, however, are critical of EPA’s approach, with Ray Kemble, a Dimock, PA, landowner and former gas industry worker calling the EPA report “a real embarrassment to the Obama administration.”

“In 2007, my water was tested by Cabot Oil & Gas and was found to be clean and safe to drink before Pennsylvania allowed fracking to come to Dimock,” Kemble said at the press conference. But in 2008, his water became poisoned.

“The Pennsylvania [Department of Environmental Protection] and the EPA confirmed this contamination, but abandoned us in 2012 and did not even include us in their long-term study. I am here today to demand that EPA recognize us, include our case in this study, and reopen the investigation,” Kemble said.

EPA Studies

EPA began investigating under the Superfund law whether contaminated drinking water in Dimock was tied to fracking but announced in 2012 that it was taking no further action, ending the study without reaching any conclusions amid criticism from GOP lawmakers that the agency lacked authority under the Superfund law to conduct such an investigation.

Wyoming rancher John Fenton told a similar story at the Oct. 28 press conference, saying that EPA’s investigation into Pavillion, WY, drinking water pollution was stalled after it allowed the state to take over the investigation and state officials then “ignored us without explanation.”

EPA announced in 2013 that it was dropping work on its December 2011 draft study suggesting that fracturing fluid “likely” contributed to contamination of an aquifer in Pavillion, WY (Inside EPA, June 28, 2013).

“EPA seems to be intent on finding the facts to support the conclusion they’ve already reached -- ‘fracking is safe’,” Fenton said in a statement, adding in his remarks that EPA has become “an agency that has been been emasculated by the oil and gas industry.”

And Earthworks policy director Lauren Pagel also expressed frustration with the Obama administration’s consideration of fracking impacts. “When push comes to shove, EPA headquarters always squashes the investigation, or minimizes the findings,” she said. “We thought the Obama administration was against the politicization of science. But when it comes to fracking, they’re not.” -- Amanda Palleschi (apalleschi@iwpnews.com) & Bridget DiCosmo (bdicosmo@iwpnews.com)

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